



Marin-Sonoma Narrows Policy Advisory Group Meeting Notes and Summary

May 16, 2007

3:30 p.m.

San Rafael City Council Chambers
City Hall, 1400 Fifth St.
San Rafael, CA

Meeting Attendees

PAG Members: Supervisor Mike Kerns, Sonoma Board of Supervisors (Vice Chair)
Supervisor Judy Arnold, Marin County Board of Supervisors
Mayor Jeanne MacLeamy, City of Novato
Mayor Peter Breen, Town of San Anselmo
Mayor Pamela Torliatt, City of Petaluma

Caltrans: Jit Pandher
Joe Lieber

SCTA: Suzanne Smith
Guy Preston

TAM: Bill Gamlen

**Vali Cooper
& Associates:** Connie Preston

CirclePoint: Ben Strumwasser
Andrea Nocito

Public: Suzanne Dunwell, Office of Senator Migden
Anita Franzi, Office of Congresswomen Lynn Woolsey
Tanya Maxwell, Aide to Supervisor Judy Arnold
Susan Lackie, City of Petaluma
Karen Nygren, Sierra Club of Marin
Joshua Townsend, Office of Assembly member Jared Huffman
Angela Colombo, North Bay Leadership Council
David Schonbrunn, TRANSDEF

1. Introductions

Introductions of PAG members were made.

2. Project Update

Pandher presented a brief project update announcing that the draft environmental document has been submitted to FHWA with a finalized version ready for public release in July. Public hearings will be scheduled for summer 2007.

3. Local Agency Update

Smith presented the PAG with a memorandum summarizing the recently reallocated STIP funds. Briefly, it states that the Bay Area, including Marin and Sonoma counties, have come in over their targeted programmed 2006 STIP funds. MTC has coordinated with counties to reduce over programmed funds resulting in funding the MSN project from 2006 STIP funds (while reducing funding from other Bay Area projects giving them priority in future STIP funding years).

It was noted that the next phase of funding work for TAM and SCTA will be to continue researching creative funding options and considering 2008 STIP funds.

Kerns added a note of thanks to TAM and SCTA for their joint efforts and collaboration in finding funds for this important project.

4. Discussion of Scenic Highways

Joe Lieber of the Caltrans Scenic Highway division gave a presentation to the PAG about the California Scenic Highway Program. A brief summary follows:

Program history Legislation was enacted in 1963 establishing a scenic highway program. Program features A highway must be designated by the Department of Transportation Advisory Committee. After designation, Caltrans posts highway signs on the route announcing it as a scenic highway.

Criteria A highway nominated for designation must be eligible (must have a current degree of scenery, not development); after nomination, the local jurisdiction must adopt a program to protect the scenic route and a Corridor Protection Program must be filed meeting state zoning and land use requirements.

Nomination process The local jurisdiction must prepare a visual assessment and resolution package which includes an explanation of the route's vividness, intactness, and unity.. Then, the local jurisdiction consults with Caltrans in order to file a Scenic Highway Resolution Package. This package must include the Resolution of Intent enacted by the local governing agency, topographic maps identifying any visual intrusions, zoning maps, a narrative of the corridor's scenic elements, and

video/photographs of the area. Caltrans reviews this package and then sends the package on to DTAC for their approval (or denial) of the corridor.

Designation process Minimum requirements (section 261 of SB 1467-Farr) must be met:

1. regulation of land use and density of development;
2. detailed land and site planning;
3. prohibition of off-site outdoor advertising and control of on-site outdoor advertising;
4. careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
5. design and appearance of structures and equipment.

Corridor protection development Public participation results in a protection program that meets local desires and considers local property owners, local citizens' committees, and environmental groups.

Review of protection program Caltrans verifies that the program meets the five outlined requirements and then submits the program to DTAC for review and recommendation.

Monitoring process Once every five years the following shall be completed:

1. Caltrans reviews protection plan;
2. local jurisdictions attest to the continued enforcement of the protection measures; and
3. the route is designated for an additional five years.

Additional information

Non-compliance during monitoring periods could result in revoking the designation.

Local jurisdictions can request removal of designation at any time.

Additional Statutes Streets and Highways Code, Division 1, Chapter 1, Article 3; Streets and Highways Code, Division 1, Chapter 2, Article 2.5; Streets and Highways Code, Division 3, Chapter 4; and Public Utilities Code, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 2.

PAG asked for the benefits of this designation. Lieber suggested that at times, a designation can increase tourism to the area. Lieber furthered that the designation often recognizes the area as a visually special area adding credibility to locals by protecting their area.

It was noted that designation does not offer any potential funding for the MSN project. Similarly, it was noted that in the past, PAG had not moved forward with the designation process in an effort to protect, and not deter, the development of the Narrows project. Lieber stated that PUC does offer some funding for underground utilities in these corridors.

Torliatt noted that this process requires locals to preserve zoning within the jurisdiction of the project.

Kerns noted that existing billboards may serve as a problem. Lieber stated that existing billboards could be bought out.

Torliatt asked for the planning departments in Sonoma and Marin counties to explore this issue further, without detracting from the MSN project. This would be a parallel process. Arnold and Kerns seconded the request and noted that both counties are updating their general plans which may further the research, or may cause this research to begin after

the plans have been approved. This issue will follow on the next PAG agenda for an update from the local planning departments.

5. Next Meeting

Kerns requested the next meeting be established after the public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Report has ended.

6. Public Comment

Nygren thanked PAG for considering the scenic highway issue. She furthered the discussion by adding that continued growth in the project area, notably, near the San Antonio interchange, could take away from the ability to designate the corridor. She hopes the PAG will use the nomination as a tool to prevent growth and to negotiate with property owners in the area from future development. She adds that people use the corridor during travel to the wine country, and asks PAG to involve legislators such as Jared Huffman in this process.

Schonbrunn identifies the MSN project as expensive and one that offers little value to commuters. He asked PAG to consider the point when the costs of the project outweigh the benefits. He suggests using the project's funding for transit projects like SMART.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.